



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

NEWS RELEASE

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
University Drive, Pittsburgh PA 15240

pittsburgh.va.gov | 866-482-7488

For more information:
VAPHSMediaRelations@va.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 26, 2021

VA Surgeon Explains How ‘The Surgical Pause’ Is Saving Veterans’ Lives at D.C. Innovation Talks

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System surgeon and researcher Dr. Daniel Hall will be a featured speaker Oct. 28 at the [2021 Veterans Health Administration \(VHA\) Innovation Experience \(iEX\)](#) in Washington, D.C.

In a format similar to a TED talk, Hall will explain in ["The Surgical Pause"](#) how he is implementing a pre-op procedure across VA that is saving Veterans’ lives. The surgical pause uses a 14-question survey to screen Veterans for frailty *before* surgeries so their care plan can be optimized.

Hall’s research on the screening was featured in 2017 in [JAMA Surgery](#) and the [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#). The research and story highlight the ease and effectiveness of the survey tool, the Risk Analysis Index (RAI), and how it may improve post-op survival rates.

“Since the pandemic began, VAs -- and many U.S. hospitals -- postponed elective surgeries. As more and more people are vaccinated, the number of elective procedures being scheduled continues to rise,” Hall said. “It’s important for surgeons to assess their patients in a systematic way to see if there are risks, whether they can be lessened, and ensure that patient expectations are realistic and aligned with their goals.”

Further research published in 2019 in [JAMA Surgery](#) documents the connection between frailty and death rates, even on procedures that are considered low risk.

Expansion of the RAI tool to sister VA systems began in 2019 after Hall [earned VA Innovation Ecosystem’s Gold Status](#) during VA’s version of the TV program “Shark Tank.” After winning, Hall went on to work with the [VHA Innovation Ecosystems Diffusion of Excellence \(DOE\)](#) program where he is receiving support and resources to diffuse the surgical pause across all [VA facilities that perform surgery](#).

Hall’s talk is approximately seven minutes long and is [scheduled](#) for Oct. 28 between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m. The seminar is virtual and open to all who [register](#).

The iEX conference is also promoting the public launch of the [VA Diffusion Marketplace](#) where details of innovative VA health care practices such as the surgical pause are shared.

VHA's DOE specializes in diffusing emergent, high-impact clinical and operational promising practices to standardize enterprise-wide health care improvement initiatives.

Media representatives who are interested in speaking with Dr. Hall about his research on frailty and surgery, the RAI or The Surgical Pause should email VAPHSMediaRelations@va.gov to arrange an interview.

###

ABOUT VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) is one of the largest and most progressive VA health care systems in the nation. More than 4,000 employees serve nearly 80,000 veterans every year, providing a range of services from complex transplant medicine to routine primary care. VAPHS is a leader in virtual care delivery through telehealth technology; a center of research and learning with 118 research investigators and \$13.2 million in funding; and a provider of state-of-the-art health care training to some 1,500 student trainees annually. VAPHS provides care at medical centers in Oakland and O'Hara Township in Pennsylvania and five outpatient clinics in Belmont County, Ohio, and Beaver, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania. Veterans can call 412-360-6162 to check eligibility or enrollment. Stay up to date at pittsburgh.va.gov, [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).